

Touring Western Indiana? Mark your calendar along with your map.

By Sally Campbell Grout

Ordinarily, when you're planning a trip, you use a map to plan your route. But if you're visiting the western part of the Hoosier State, you may want to plan a trip around your calendar. Here, you'll find perfect activities to round out your summer and to make this fall particularly fun.

**You'll still need your sunscreen.**

Your first clue that fall is around the corner isn't necessarily a drop in the temperature—or even dropping leaves. It's the diminishing daylight hours. That later-rising, earlier-setting sun is telling you to hit the Western Indiana's fun parks while you still have the chance.

The fun at Indiana Beach Amusement and Camp Resort (574-583-4141) wraps up over Labor Day weekend, so you still have a little time to enjoy the live shows, swimming beach, water park, and amusement park with its 36 rides (including five fabulous roller coasters, such as the Hoosier Hurricane, Indiana's fastest roller coaster). However, to see "Bad to the Bone," a breathtaking water show, get there a little sooner. The talented water sports professionals put on four shows per day, but their last day to perform this season is August 22.

While those hot sunny rays are still coming your way, splash your way over to Lafayette's Tropicanae Cove Family Aquatic Center (765-771-SWIM). Located in historic Columbian Park, Tropicanae Cove's fun includes a giant water slide, a lazy river, a kids' water playground, and sand volleyball. The water park is open from June through August, but you'll find plenty of other fun at Columbian Park at other times of the year too, including a zoo, a sprawling playground, and just-for-kids-sized amusement rides.

**The perfect time for a State Park.**

Truth be told, any time of year is a good time to visit an Indiana State Park. The next few weeks simply offer an opportunity to put a summer spin on your experience before you come back to admire the fall foliage. At Indiana's first state park, McCormick's Creek State Park in Spencer (812-829-2235), you'll see plenty of that world-famous Indiana limestone. Enjoy unique limestone formations, waterfalls, thick woods, high cliffs and a hillside cave. In addition, McCormick's Creek offers a swimming pool, saddle barn, camping, hiking, tennis, and a cozy place to stay: the Canyon Inn (877-922-6966).

Shades State Park in Waveland (765-435-2810) is filled with fabulous views, with sandstone cliffs that overlook Sugar Creek. Hike past shady ravines, fish, picnic, and look for giant hemlock trees and rare Canada yews. Sugar Creek also runs through Turkey Run State Park in Marshall (765-579-2635). Here, you'll also find more deep ravines, hiking, fishing, and camping, along with a swimming pool, saddle barn, and the Turkey Run Inn (877-500-6151). To take a leisurely canoe, kayak, or tube ride down Sugar Creek, contact Clements Canoes, Inc. in Crawfordsville (765-362-2781).

A couple more naturally beautiful places to note: At Cagles Mill Lake/Lieber State Recreation Area (765-795-4576) in Cloverdale, you'll find Cataract Falls, the largest waterfalls in Indiana. And in West Lafayette, Prophetstown State Park (765-567-4919) is scheduled to open in late 2004.

### **Get that brain back in working order.**

Sooner rather than later, the school bells will be ringing. This August, plan a little Indiana History review before those first bells ring. The Midtown Museum of Native Culture in Waynetown (765-376-7128) educates visitors about the nation's original residents. In the Lafayette area, the Museum at Prophetstown (765-567-4700) preserves and interprets 1920s agricultural and environmental history, and tells the story of the Native Americans of the Wabash River Valley region. In Dana, the Ernie Pyle State Historic Site (765-665-3633) commemorates the life and the words of the respected World War II reporter. And in Linden, the Linden Depot Museum (765-339-7245) stands as Indiana's oldest intact junction depot. Built in 1907, it has since been restored to the 1950s era of railroading.

### **Fall festival fun.**

Hoosiers can always find something to celebrate, but fall seems to be prime festival season. Some of the state's favorites take place in Western Indiana.

If you go to the movies just to smell the popcorn, bring your nostrils to the Popcorn Festival of Clay County in Brazil (812-448-2307) October 1-3, 2004. Along with food and craft vendors, entertainment, a parade, and sporting events, the festival honors Clay County's own popcorn genius, Orville Redenbacher.

The Feast of the Hunters' Moon in West Lafayette (765-476-8411), October 2-3, 2004, is a re-enactment of an annual fall gathering between the French and Native Americans in the mid-1700s. The festival takes place on the grounds of what's now Fort Ouiatenon Historic Park, an area that once served as a fur-trading post. During the Feast, you can sample some of the food, fun, and craftsmanship of that time. Typical

entertainment can include performances from Fife and Drums Corps, canoe races, Native American stories, and landing of the voyagers; traditional crafts often feature woodcrafts, blacksmiths, pottery, and weaving. The food booths give you a chance to sample some tasty 18<sup>th</sup> century fare, including parched corn, buffalo, and French pastries.

With 32 covered bridges, Parke County is known as the Covered Bridge Capital of the World. And from October 8-17, 2004 they celebrate those bridges in a big way. During the Parke County Covered Bridge Festival (765-569-5226), several communities invite you to eat, shop, tour, and, mostly, admire the bridges. In Bridgeton, see a 245-foot covered bridge near a working gristmill, along with artists, weavers, and food. In Mansfield Village, an 1820s roller mill sits alongside an 1867 covered bridge. You'll also find hundreds of vendors here. Mecca offers handmade crafts, a one-room school, and a 1901 high school. Montezuma is where you'll find arts and crafts and a hog roast on weekends. Rosedale is filled with arts and crafts, antiques, and food. In Tangier, you'll find five covered bridges, and the festival's world famous "buried roast beef." In Rockville, the festival headquarters, you can shop among huge tents of arts and crafts around the 1879 county courthouse. This is also where you'll find guided tours and great country food.

#### **See what the night air does for your singing voice.**

If you've limited your warbling to the shower and the car, here's your chance to join a chorus that doesn't care how you sound: a pack of wolves, or, more specifically, the wolves at Wolf Park in Battle Ground (765-567-2265) near Lafayette. At this non-profit educational wildlife facility, visitors can watch wolves interact with each other and with a small herd of bison. (Don't worry; the wolves are not allowed to harm their prey.) Other animals calling Wolf Park home include foxes and a coyote. The park is open from May to November, but Saturday's "Howl Nights" are a particularly fun time to visit. At night, the wolves are most active. And they don't mind if you howl along!

#### **Use a rainy day to get inspired.**

Looking for some indoor activities when the sky turns gray? A rainy day is the perfect time to visit an art museum. The Swope Art Museum in Terre Haute (812-238-1676) presents works of several American painters and sculptors, such as T.C. Steele, Edward Hopper, Thomas Hart Benton, and Grant Wood. The Art Museum of Greater Lafayette (765-742-1128) is an Accredited American Art Museum affiliated with the Smithsonian. Among its offerings: permanent American and Indiana art collections, changing exhibits, programs, and studio classes.

Or, perhaps you prefer your art served right to your table, especially if you're admiring the craftsmanship in a fine beer. The Bleemel Building &

The Terre Haute Brewery Co. & Tap Room & Museum (812-234-2800) serves Champagne Velvet Beer, re-created using the circa 1900 recipe. Visit the original 1837 brewery, enjoy a beer or a root beer, browse a museum filled with advertising and memorabilia, and stay for lunch or dinner.

**It's hard to define the best of the west.**

You'll find plenty of other calendar-filling activities throughout Western Indiana—and the entire state—when you visit [enjoyindiana.com](http://enjoyindiana.com).